

**Fisheries Committee Meeting
May 2, 2014
Commission Room**

I. Discussion Item – Boat Motor Restrictions on Department-Owned Lakes

Surveys have indicated that most anglers favor allowing boat motors greater than 10 hp to be used at idle-speed only on eight Department-owned lakes that currently restrict use of those motors and only allow trolling motors for boats with the larger motors. As gasoline prices have increased and the general economy has declined, interest in this issue has escalated and anglers have requested that KDFWR pass this regulation. One of the most important aspects to increasing fishing opportunities in our lakes is access, and recent surveys have indicated that allowing boats with larger motors to operate at idle-speed only would increase angler use by at least 17%. The same surveys indicated that 70% to 90% of Kentucky's anglers either favor or have no opinion concerning this proposal. The proposed regulation would affect the following lakes: Beaver (148 acres; Anderson County), Kincaid (161 acres; Pendleton County), Elmer Davis (131 acres; Owen County), Corinth (77 acres; Grant County), Boltz (86 acres; Grant County), Bullock Pen (146 acres; Grant County), Shanty Hollow (109 acres; Warren County), and Swan (207 acres; Ballard County; Boatwright WMA).

In accordance with Chapter 150.027, KDFWR held 6 public hearings within 10 miles of the lakes where the regulation may possibly affect owners of land adjacent to the lakes' buffers. Overwhelmingly, participants at the meetings were in favor of the idle-speed only proposal; except for the Beaver Lake area which was attended mostly by adjacent landowners who were against the proposed regulation. Reasons given for opposition included: Boating safety for canoes and kayaks, erosion, illegal operation of motors, pollution, and enforcement. There was also a reference to a petition that included 96 signatures of landowners and area residents who signed to oppose an idle-speed regulation on Beaver Lake. However, the landowners' petition is not representative of the general public's opinions in that area and some who signed the petition indicated that they were not actually against the idea. The random survey of licensed anglers living near Beaver Lake included 284 participants, and 50% favored the proposal, 31% had no opinion, and 18% opposed.

II. Discussion Item – Commercial Harvest Restrictions for Alligator Gar

Alligator gar were re-introduced into Western Kentucky streams beginning in 2009 in an effort to re-establish a naturally reproducing population. A regulation restricting licensed sport fishermen and women from harvesting Alligator gar was passed by the KDFWR Commission in March, 2014. A similar restriction should be imposed on commercial fishing harvest to ensure that the gar population size is allowed to increase and eventually become self sustaining. Therefore, we recommend a commercial, no-harvest restriction for Alligator gar.

III. Discussion Item – Paddlefish Harvest Permits for Sportfish License Holders

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) held a meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, in February to inform states that there is a heightened concern that paddlefish are being over harvested. The USFWS representative on the board of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species and Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) explained that paddlefish are listed in their Appendix II grouping (species vulnerable to overexploitation, but not at risk of extinction; commercial and non-commercial trade allowed; permits/certificates required for export, but not for import). CITES is a group represented by 175 nations which relies on scientific data to address the effects of exportation on species which may be considered threatened by commercial interests. Unless CITES finds that harvest rates of commercially exported species are not detrimental to those species (Non-Detriment Finding or NDF), commercial exportation of the fish or their roe will not be allowed. Additionally, failure to get an NDF would trigger a response by the USFWS to potentially list paddlefish as threatened or endangered which would result in a commercial and sport harvest restriction on the fish. The USFWS is asking all states that allow commercial or sport harvest of paddlefish to provide a management plan that would include extensive research used to determine the status of paddlefish in the Mississippi River basin and for potential regulatory action needed to ensure that overharvest is not occurring. Currently, KDFWR cannot accurately estimate paddlefish harvest by licensed anglers who are snagging or bowfishing for the fish. Several states have begun harvest permit programs for paddlefish to promote harvest data collection. The Fisheries Division recommends initiation of a sportfishing paddlefish harvest permit system that would employ an online check system equivalent to the current KDFWR deer and turkey system. Paddlefish permits would be available online for free or by calling KDFWR. A person harvesting a paddlefish would be required to log the date and time of capture, eye to fork length, and gender. The angler or bowfisher would have 24 hours from the time of harvest to enter the information either online or by calling KDFWR. This information is considered essential by the USFWS in order to address angler exploitation questions.